

No conspiracy found in JFK, King killings

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department has officially ended its inquiry into the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., finding "no persuasive evidence" to support conspiracy theories, according to department documents.

A Justice Department memo, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, was the department's admittedly long-overdue response to the House Select Committee on Assassinations' recommendation 10 years ago for further investigation.

William F. Weld, who was head of the department's criminal division until he quit at the end of March, told Rep. Peter Rodino, D-N.J., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, that all known leads have been checked.

"The Department of Justice has concluded that no persuasive evidence can be identified to support the theory of a conspiracy in either the assassination of President Kennedy or the assassination of Dr. King," Weld wrote in the undated memo.

"No further investigation appears to be warranted in either matter unless new information which is sufficient to support additional investigative activity becomes available," he added.

The Justice Department's response to the conspiracy theories comes as no surprise. It is, however, the first time the department has made a formal conclusion, said Justice spokesman Dean St. Dennis.

The House Assassinations Committee concluded in 1978 that Kennedy was "probably" assassinated as the result of a conspiracy involving a second gunman, a finding that broke from the Warren Commission's belief that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963. The House panel also said there was a "likelihood" that King's slaying in 1968 was part of a conspiracy.

Weld said the Justice Department had completed "virtually all" of its inquiry by the end of 1983, but delayed its response to the House Judiciary Committee until all public comment on the National Academy study was reviewed.